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Biography of

Timothy B. Blackstone

By

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Author of "The Washington Sketch Book"
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TIMOTHY B. BLACKSTONE

Biography of **Timothy B. Blackstone**

Mr. Timothy B. Blackstone, president of the Chicago and Alton Railroad from 1864 to 1899, a period longer than that of any other railroad president of his day, was born at Branford, Connecticut, March 28, 1829, and died at Chicago May 26, 1900.

Mr. Blackstone was preëminently a man of affairs, with a mind broadened by wide study, constant observation of means that lead to ends and a varied and exacting experience that in itself was a mental training.

He was indeed a remarkable man of a remarkable family. Sir William Blackstone, the author of the world's famous "Blackstone Commentaries," was a member of this family.

A river in Rhode Island and a town in Massachusetts were named "Blackstone," in honor of the first progenitor of the Blackstone family in this country and Blackstone Avenue in Chicago is named for the subject of this sketch.

The ancestral estate at Branford, where Mr. Timothy B. Blackstone was born and where his early life was spent, was the birthplace of generations of Blackstones, for the family tree had been planted here over two centuries ago, and it was long before this, however, that it first took root in American soil, while in England the family can be traced back as far as 1347.

Well authenticated records show that in 1623 William Blackstone or Blaxton, as he spelled his name, who is known in family history as well as New England history as William the Pilgrim, was engaged in the cultivation of a small farm, a part of which is now Boston Commons.

It is supposed that this William Blackstone came to America from the county of Durham, England, where records show that one William Blaxton sold, in that year,



HON. JAMES BLACKSTONE

certain lands which had passed from father to son, in the family of which he was a member, through at least eleven generations, the records having been examined as far back as the death of another William Blackstone in 1349.

No record can be found in England subsequent to 1622 which relates to the William Blaxton who made the sale of lands before referred to in that year, and as an Englishman appeared in Massachusetts where Boston now is, that year or the year following, there can be little doubt that they were one and the same personage. The presumptive evidence is strong enough to warrant this conclusion, and this makes the line of descent unbroken from William Blaxton, who died in England in 1349, to the William Blackstone of Boston, Massachusetts, and to Timothy B. Blackstone, a period of over five centuries.

The first progenitor of the family in this country, Rev. William Blackstone, who was born in England in 1595, was a graduate of Emanuel College, Cambridge. He received Episcopal ordination in England after graduation, but like John Davenport of New Haven, he soon became of Puritan persuasion, and on account of his nonconformity left England and came to this country, becoming the first white settler upon that famous tract of land which is now the site of the city of Boston. When the Massachusetts company came to New England they found William Blackstone settled here. He had been there long enough to have planted an orchard of apple trees. Upon his invitation the principal part of the Massachusetts colony removed from Charlestown and founded the town of Boston on land which Mr. Blackstone desired them to occupy. He was the first inhabitant of Boston and the colony records of May 18, 1631, show that he was the first person admitted a free man of that town. His house and orchard were located upon a spot about half way between Boston Commons and the Charles River.

After a few years of acquaintance with the peculiar notions of the Puritans of Boston on the subject of church organization and government William Blackstone was satisfied that while he had not been able to conform to the Church of the Archbishop neither could he conform to the Puritan Church of Boston, and when the



THE JAMES BLACKSTONE MEMORIAL LIBRARY, BRANFORD, CONN.

Puritans urged him to join them he constantly declined, using, it is said, this language:

"I came from England because I did not like the Lord Bishop but I cannot join with you because I would not be under the Lord Brethren."

In 1633 an agreement was entered into between himself and the Puritans, in the divisions of the lands, that he should have fifty acres allotted to him near his house forever. In 1635 he sold forty-five of these acres to the company for thirty pounds, retaining the six acres upon which was his orchard. Soon after this he moved to Rhode Island, living at what is now Lonsdale, about six miles from Providence, until the time of his death, which occurred in 1675. Soon after leaving Boston he sold his orchard of six acres to a man named Pepys.

He was not in any manner driven from Boston by the Puritans, but holding certain beliefs which did not agree with those of the new settlers he decided to move peacefully to a new location, actuated by similar motives to those which led John Davenport to leave New Haven and go to Boston after the union of the New Haven colony with the Connecticut colony at Hartford.

In July, 1659, he was married at Boston to Mrs. Sarah Stevenson, the widow of John Stevenson. That it was an event of importance in the colony is evident from the fact that Governor Endicott officiated at the solemnization of the marriage.

All records and accounts of the Rev. William Blackstone show him to have been a deeply religious man, courageous and conscientious, with literary tastes; of correct, industrious, thrifty habits; kind and philanthropic feelings; living for several years on Boston Neck, and demonstrating the ability of the white man to live in peace with only Indians for his neighbors. Indeed he was a true friend to the Indians and conducted mission services for them. While living in Rhode Island he frequently went to Providence to preach the gospel and was highly esteemed by all the people of that colony.

The inventory of his estate after his death included a house and orchard, 200 acres of land, interest in the Providence Meadow, and a library of 186 volumes of books in various languages.



For 200 years his grave was marked by two plain stones, but these were replaced later by an appropriate monument, erected by his descendants.

His only son, John Blackstone, married in 1692 and about 1713 moved to the town of Branford, Connecticut, where he resided on land southeast of the center of the town and bounded southerly by the sea.

The son of this John Blackstone was born in 1699, and died in Branford January 3, 1785, nearly eighty-six years of age. His son, John Blackstone, was born in Branford in 1731 and died there August 10, 1816.

The son of this last John Blackstone, Timothy Blackstone, was born in Branford in 1766 and died there in 1849 aged eighty-three. This Timothy Blackstone was the father of the Hon. James Blackstone, the father of the subject of this sketch, who was born in Branford in the old homestead of his father and grandfather in 1793, and died in 1889 in the house he built on the estate opposite this old homestead, aged ninety-three years.

Here were five generations of the Blackstones living and dying upon the old family farm in Branford. All of them possessed many of the traits of their first ancestor in this country. They were all men of great force of character, industry, modesty and marked executive ability.

Mr. James Blackstone married Sarah Beach, who was a native of Branford. She was the daughter of Mr. Asa Beach, who was a prominent man of this place.

James and Sarah Blackstone's eldest son, George, died in 1861, never having married. The eldest daughter, Mary, married Samuel O. Plant. Her four grandchildren, being the children of her daughter, Mrs. Sara Plant Harrison, are Sara, William L., Paul W., and Gertrude P. Harrison. Her daughter, Ellen Plant, lived with her in Branford till her death. The second son of James and Sarah Blackstone, Lorenzo Blackstone, who lived for many years in Norwich, and died there in 1888, had five children. The eldest, James DeTrafford Blackstone, had one son, Lorenzo. The second child of Lorenzo, Mrs. Harriet Blackstone Camp of Norwich, has three children—Walter Trumbull, Talcott Hale, and Elizabeth Norton Camp. The second daughter of Lorenzo is Mrs. Francis Ella Huntington of Norwich. The fourth child of Lorenzo



is William Norton Blackstone of Norwich, and his youngest son, Louis Lorenzo Blackstone, died in 1893.

The second daughter of James and Sarah Blackstone, Ellen, married Henry B. Plant. She died in 1861, leaving one son, Morton T. Plant, who had one son, Henry B. Plant, Jr.

James and Sarah Blackstone's third son, John Blackstone, died a number of years ago, leaving three children, George and Adelaide Blackstone and Mrs. Emma Pond. George is now living on the old family farm—the sixth generation. Timothy B. Blackstone was James and Sarah Blackstone's youngest child.

The portraits of James Blackstone and Sir William Blackstone, the great authority upon the common law of England, who were cousins in the fifth degree, bear a marked family resemblance to each other.

Mr. James Blackstone was a man of great influence in the community where he spent his long life of ninety-three years. Like his ancestors he was a prosperous farmer. When only twenty years old he was elected captain in the Connecticut Militia and as such commanded his company for several months while serving as coast guard on Long Island Sound during the War of 1812-15. Before the separation of North Branford in 1831 the township of Branford, as one of the original towns, was entitled to two representatives in the General Assembly, and for years Captain James Blackstone of Branford and Captain Jonathan Ross of North Branford were the representatives of the town at Hartford and New Haven. At various times Mr. James Blackstone held important local offices of the town as assessor and first selectman.

In 1842 he represented the sixth district in the state Senate. In politics he was a Federalist, a Whig, and a Republican. He was public spirited and his advice and counsel were sought by people of his own town and of neighboring places, when occasions arose concerning the settlement of estates or other matters where the advice and opinion of a thoughtful man of marked good judgment were needed. The Hon. Lynde Harrison said this of him in a public address:

"The first time I ever saw Captain James Blackstone he



BRONZE ENTRANCE DOORS

was pointed out to me by a resident of the town as he was driving past the old public square with the remark, 'This is Captain James Blackstone. When he rises in a town meeting and says, "Mr. Moderator, in my humble opinion, it is better for this town that a certain course be taken," the expression of his opinion always prevails with the majority of the voters in the meeting, so great is the confidence the people of the town have in his judgment.' If his tastes had led him to a larger place for the exercise of his ability, no field would have been so large that he would not have been a leader among men."

Yet here he dwelt pursuing the even tenor of his way and performing well his part throughout the whole of his long life of ninety-three years, honored and beloved. Over twenty years ago James Blackstone passed to his reward yet his influence for good still continues in this community where his personality was so long a felt power.

"For three-score years and ten his life has run
Through varied scenes of happiness and woe;
But constant through the wide vicissitude,
He has confessed the Giver of his joys,
And kissed the hand that took them; and when'er
Bereavement has oppressed his soul with grief,
Or sharp misfortune stung his heart with pain,
He has bowed down in childlike faith and said:
"Thy will, O God—thy will be done, not mine.'"

—*Holland.*

The youngest son, Timothy Beach Blackstone, was named Timothy for his grandfather and Beach for his mother's maiden name. He inherited her even temper and amiable disposition, and his father's remarkable ability, his force and strength of character and possessed the same power of clear thinking and good judgment, and the aggressive traits and true courage and tenacity of purpose that characterized the earliest progenitor of the Blackstone family in this country. His parents early taught him the important lessons of industry, thrift, and the value of time, and the tenets of the Christian religion, to which he adhered during his entire life.

He had the blessed inheritance of the Christian faith. Of him it might be said as St. Paul said to his friend



Timothy of old: "The faith that is in thee was in thy grandmother."

Our young Timothy early received a test of the metal that was in him and he showed himself truly brave and courageous. The high test of character is always to meet the trial that is sent; to overcome the difficulties that lie in the path.

The years of his boyhood were about equally divided between work and play on the home farm and attending the common school of the locality till he was sixteen years of age, when he entered a celebrated neighboring academy, which he attended till he was eighteen years old. Then failing health compelled him to leave the academy. This was a great disappointment to his parents who, recognizing the brilliancy of his intellect, desired to give him collegiate training, and it was the first great trial of his young life. To a less resolute soul it might have meant life failure but not to a brave heart like his.

On the advice of the family physician he sought outdoor employment which should furnish needed exercise and not overtax his physical powers. An opportunity was offered for him to connect himself with the engineering corps then engaged in surveying and locating the New York and New Haven Railroad, under the supervision of Colonel Roswell B. Mason, afterward one of the most widely known civil engineers of the Northwest. Mr. Blackstone accepted the position offered him, that of rodman, and he made this the stepping stone to his great success. Here he secured that thorough practical training which, combined with a determination to succeed in whatever he undertook, placed him in the leading position he afterward occupied in railroad circles. He began his work as rodman with this surveying party in 1848, one of his associates at that time being Mr. A. Anderson, since chief engineer of the Northern Pacific Railroad.

In this new and somewhat arduous employment the youth exhibited remarkable energy and perseverance. Although at first lacking the physical vigor that made the task easy, he performed his allotted share of duties faithfully and soon found that he had entered a most congenial field of labor, and was rapidly recovering health and strength.



LECTURE HALL

He became deeply interested in a study of the science of engineering, to which he applied himself diligently and toward a practical mastery of which science he made rapid progress, and his advancement to a more important position was correspondingly rapid. At the end of one year he left the New York and New Haven road to become assistant engineer of the Stockbridge and Pittsfield Railroad, a short line constructed in 1849, and afterward a part of the Housatonic Railroad. His labors here covering but a few months were so successfully performed and added so much to his professional reputation that work flowed in upon him from various quarters and for the next two years he was constantly employed.

He accepted a similar position on the Vermont Valley Railroad, a line that was being built from Brattleboro to Bellows Falls. And now his faithfulness in his first humble position is to meet its reward. Col. Roswell B. Mason, who had received the appointment of chief engineer of the Illinois Central Railroad, had not forgotten the bright young man whom ill-health had compelled to leave the academy and hold the rodman's chain. He remembered his faithful work, and in 1851 he requested Mr. Blackstone to come West and take charge of the construction of the projected line between Bloomington and Dixon. Mr. Blackstone, observing the large field the great West offered for railroad enterprises, responded to this summons of his former chief and came to La Salle, Illinois, being charged with the responsibility of making the preliminary surveys and locating and supervising the construction of that portion of the projected line that lay between Bloomington and Dixon. Though only twenty-two years of age when he assumed this responsible position he was considered even then an expert in his profession.

While living at La Salle he became closely identified with the town and was regarded as one of the most able and enterprising young men of the place. In 1854 he was elected mayor of La Salle and served one term with credit to himself and to his constituency, retiring from office with the good will and thanks of the community. But he never could be induced to accept another political office or any office or position whatever other than that



pertaining to railroad control and management. In 1856 he became chief engineer of the Joliet and Chicago Railroad Company, which had been chartered in 1854, being empowered to construct the railroad from Joliet via Lockport to Chicago. Mr. Blackstone became financially interested in this enterprise, supervised its location and construction and rapidly pushed it to completion. This line when completed became a part of the new system of railroads known then as the St. Louis, Alton and Chicago line, although the Joliet and Chicago maintained a separate corporate existence.

The St. Louis, Alton and Chicago Railroad was made up of what was originally the Alton and Sangamon railroads, extending from Alton to Springfield and completed in 1853; the Chicago and Mississippi Railroad, extending from Springfield to Joliet and completed in 1856; and the Joliet and Chicago. In 1861, five years after the completion of the Joliet and Chicago Railroad, Mr. Blackstone became president of this company, and for three years he remained at the head of this corporation, managing its affairs successfully while other divisions of the St. Louis, Chicago and Alton Railway were passing through bankruptcy and being managed by receivers.

Mr. Blackstone's genius for the management of railroads attracted the attention of other roads and many efforts were made to obtain his services, indeed, his recognized ability as a railroad manager soon made him one of the most conspicuous figures in the Western railway world, and gave him, while still a young man, the prominence which he retained for thirty years. When he came West he had the backing of an elder brother who was a man of considerable wealth in Connecticut.

Among other ventures he bought a large tract of land and laid out the town of Mendota, Ill. Success attended his efforts in many directions. He was one of the incorporators and the first president of the Union Stock Yards and Transit Company to which a charter was granted by the State Legislature under date of February 13, 1865. It had a capital of one million dollars, the principal portion of which was subscribed by the nine railroads chiefly interested in the carrying of live stock, one of which was the Chicago and Alton.



STAIRCASE

It was thought necessary to reorganize the St. Louis, Chicago & Alton railroad system in 1861 and a commission was constituted for that purpose by legislative enactment. The Commission purchased the bankrupt portion of the line and perfected a new organization for their operations to which they gave the name of "The Chicago and Alton Railroad Company." This company leased the Joliet and Chicago Railroad in 1864, Mr. Blackstone becoming one of the directors of the new company. Three months later he was chosen president of the board, and the fact that the prosperity of the company dates from that time is conclusive evidence of his able and efficient management.

When Mr. Blackstone assumed the management of the Chicago and Alton Railroad the company operated under lease and ownership two hundred and fifty miles of road. Soon after he became president of the company, a new line was constructed between Alton and East St. Louis, which was known as the Alton and East St. Louis Railroad and was leased by the Chicago and Alton, the railroad connections between Chicago and St. Louis being thus complete.

In 1867 the St. Louis, Jacksonville and Chicago Railway became a part of the Chicago and Alton system and other lines were added since that time as extensions seemed necessary or desirable, so that in 1890 this corporation owned and had leased 850 miles of railroad, 600 miles of which were added to the system since Mr. Blackstone assumed its control and direction as its chief executive officer twenty-six years previous. The finances of the company were skillfully and carefully managed at the same time that the extension and improvements of the line were going on. Quick to discover the resources of the country traversed by the lines of railroad over which he had control, Mr. Blackstone was prompt in aiding their development and the result was a rapid and constant increase of traffic over the Chicago and Alton, notwithstanding the multiplication of transportation facilities of competing lines.

For thirty years Mr. Blackstone managed with consummate skill the affairs of this, the most successful of all the great railroads of the Middle West. His policy was at once conservative and aggressive, a combination which



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made the Chicago and Alton one of the best paying railroads of the United States. Its securities were eagerly sought after by the most conservative financiers and were recommended as one of the safest of endowment investments for charitable, educational or other public institutions.

In 1868, four years after he had assumed the management of the road its net earnings were over two millions of dollars, and it never since failed to make a favorable showing at the end of each year. For many years it paid ten per cent dividends, and for a period of thirty years, never less than six or eight per cent per annum.

In disposing of his stock, consequent on the transfer of the line to a new corporation, in 1899, Mr. Blackstone rejected offers for his stock, aggregating nearly one third of the whole, which would have netted him one million dollars in excess of the amount received, because he was not willing to use his position to reap an advantage over smaller stockholders. This was true Christianity in motion, but it was only one of many evidences of the high motives that actuated Mr. Blackstone. His was not merely a Sabbath day religion, but a religion that adorned and beautified and intensified his everyday life. His was the purity and rectitude of a great soul and a truly magnanimous nature. The man was greater than any of his accomplishments, yet few accomplished as much as he.

While several of the men who reached the head of great railroad systems in the United States, like Mr. Blackstone, climbed to their positions from the lowest round of the ladder, he had no contemporary who for so long a time had so much to do with shaping the policies and controlling the destinies of a single corporation, and who retained so long the implicit confidence and good will of so large a body of stockholders in any similar enterprise. He was not only the oldest in length of service but Mr. Blackstone was at once one of the most practical, clear-headed of the successful railroad presidents of the day. His success was due primarily to natural qualifications and adaptability for the business in which he engaged by accident rather than by design, combined with extraordinary executive ability.



PAINTINGS IN THE DOME

Other things contributed in no small degree, however to the sum total of what he accomplished. He had a wide and sympathetic understanding of men. He was accurate in his judgment of those whom he found necessary to call about him to aid him in railroad management, prompt in recognizing the merits of subordinates and always ready to reward faithful and efficient service. He was unassuming at all times and the kind consideration he always showed his employees endeared him to them and they respected him as much as they admired him. He had a genius for making friends with all from the lowest to the highest. His ability to judge and decide questions of vital import under consideration was a marked trait and he always kept fully abreast of the times, being well informed on vital subjects of the day. While standing at the head of a great corporation, he at all times regarded himself as the servant of that corporation and labored constantly and assiduously to further its interests, add to the value of its properties and secure to its shareholders the best possible returns for their investments, while giving to the traveling public excellent service.

While he disposed of matters of business expeditiously and his numerous engagements usually made brief interviews necessary, he was easily approached, his manner was affable and kind. He was indeed a gentleman of the old school. It was said of him that he was the most easily approached and most affable railroad president of his day.

The Alton, under Mr. Blackstone, was always a progressive road. He was eager to adopt new improvements which he thought practical. It was an Alton coach from which the first sleeper was made and it was on the Alton that the first dining car was run. One reason for the success of the road was that Mr. Blackstone would not allow any speculating with the stock, and as he owned the majority of the stock he was able to prevent this.



PAINTINGS IN THE DOME

Mrs. Timothy B. Blackstone

In enumerating the contributing causes to his success a very important one should not be omitted. Mr. Blackstone had the sustaining, inspiring influence of a happy home life. His wife is one of those rare women who combine exquisite gentleness with great strength of character, in whose presence one finds a restful comfort that cheers and strengthens. From their home her husband could go to his strenuous duties with the trend of success, with a power and strength that enabled him to meet difficulties and perplexities, and be the great, strong force he was and exert the commanding influence he did and, too, it kept him from bitterness and asperity in the rough and tumble of life's struggle. She carried all the honors that the years brought to her with a fine rare grace and simplicity; no woman in all the land can surpass her in dignity and graciousness and that kindliness that is a patent of true nobility.

Like her husband she came of a prominent old Connecticut family and is a native of Norwich, Connecticut. Her maiden name was Isabella Farnsworth Norton. Her father, Henry B. Norton, was a successful merchant of Norwich.

Mrs. Blackstone was always in full sympathy with her husband's benevolences, and her charities have been many and generous, for she has done much on her own inclination.

While Mr. Blackstone was a man who gathered wealth he lived unostentatiously. The money he spent lavishly usually went to charities and philanthropies. He gave liberally to widows and orphans of employees, and is said never to have turned away a worthy applicant. No one will ever know how much he gave away. During his more than a quarter of a century residence in Chicago he did much in an unassuming way for the betterment of the community.

His interest in public affairs was of that intelligent and far-sighted kind that prompts to conscientious citizenship, and loyal effort for the general welfare.



PAINTINGS IN THE DOME

He ranked among the leading citizens of the state and nation. At Lincoln's funeral he was one of one hundred prominent men to go to Springfield two hours in advance of the funeral train.

He was consulted on important questions by city and state authorities, and influenced state legislation.

Mr. Blackstone was always held in high esteem for those qualities which in all climes and in all ages have been deemed the essentials of true manhood. His life is a forceful illustration of the value of persistent and well-directed effort in achieving moral and material success from small and obscure beginnings.

It is not too much to assert that Mr. Blackstone's fine business qualifications would have earned him success in any undertaking he would have selected and given him prominence in any community.

Accidental circumstances seemed to have guided his early steps, yet by accepting the inevitable and doing with all his might what his hand found to do he progressed steadily upwards and at length with a mind trained by study, observation and experience he arrived at a higher goal than his youthful ambitions even dreamed.

Mr. Blackstone selected his subordinates carefully, each being the very best in his respective department, but the most humble employee in the office did not work harder than its honored head.

In personal characteristics Mr. Blackstone was a type of republican simplicity.

The large working force under him, a veritable army in size and discipline, recognized the inherent force of his character, admitted his wonderful grasp of railroad affairs in whole and in detail and to a man gave him respectful obedience.

On his part the President returned the compliment, duty well performed was a sure passport to his esteem. The humblest workman had only to request an interview and was sure to obtain it and sure of courteous treatment.



A Friend's Tribute to Mr. Blackstone

After his death, Col. J. H. Wood, who had been connected with the Chicago and Alton Railroad Company since 1875, as superintendent and general manager, and who enjoyed a long intimate acquaintance with Mr. Blackstone, paid him this heartfelt tribute. He said: "I consider Mr. Blackstone the ablest and best balanced business man I ever knew. He was a just and a most unselfish man. He built to the memory of his father probably the finest monument that has been built on this continent, spending more than a million dollars on it. He endowed it so it will be maintained for all time, and there is not a mark on it to indicate that T. B. Blackstone had anything to do with it. It was erected to the memory of James Blackstone, whose face and form as well as name is perpetuated in marble and upon canvas in a most beautiful library building and music hall at Branford, Connecticut, where Mr. T. B. Blackstone was born.

"He served the Alton Road for twenty-five years as president, without a salary or reward of any kind. The directors frequently offered to vote him one and finally did vote him one of \$10,000 a year, but he refused positively to accept it.

"During his presidency he personally assumed and paid all requests for charitable and political purposes or public-spirited enterprises for which contributions from the Alton were solicited. At one time his personal check was given to wipe out an obligation incurred by a director of the Alton and which he did not think should be paid by the stockholders of the company, although the directors were anxious that the company should assume it.

"There are thousands of people who will miss T. B. Blackstone more than any other man of this city ever will be missed. Most of his days were devoted to aiding others, he had been for years the custodian of the estates of a great many friends in Connecticut and New England and managed them so that they returned a living income to many widows and orphans.



TIMOTHY B. BLACKSTONE MEMORIAL BRANCH LIBRARY, CHICAGO, ILL., THE GIFT OF MRS. BLACKSTONE

"He was far more anxious to keep that income at a point where it would support them comfortably than he was to increase his own fortune. Mainly for this reason he was so bitterly opposed to the sale of the Alton to the Harriman syndicate. It was his firm conviction that the stock would be used for speculative purposes and he could not see how those people who had made him the custodian of all they possessed, and were dependent upon the dividends from their investment could reinvest the money so that it would be absolutely safe and bring in enough income to support them.

"His home life was most beautiful. He was married to Miss Isabella Farnsworth Norton of Norwich, Connecticut, in 1868. The attachment between them was touching.

"Mr. Blackstone's early life was that of a railroad engineer and up to its close he enjoyed more looking over the country for the location of a railroad line than any other employment. Twenty years ago when the Alton was extended from Mexico, Mo., to Kansas City, Mr. Blackstone personally located most of the line. In going over the country to select a location few men could keep pace with him. His movements were so rapid, over fences, plowed ground and through forests, that even the youngest and most vigorous men could not follow him for a day. He had promised his stockholders that the extension of 160 miles to Kansas City should be built and equipped for less than three million dollars and he devoted his time and energy to making good his pledge. So wrapped up was he in the Alton that when he left it he called it his child and he could not speak of surrendering it to others without showing deep feeling."

John Crerar, the donor of the Crerar Library of Chicago, was Mr. Blackstone's intimate friend. He lived in Mr. Blackstone's home on Michigan Avenue, after the fire, for twelve years. He had great respect for Mr. Blackstone's judgment and designated him as one who should be consulted freely by the executors having charge of the Crerar library and much of the success of that institution is due to Mr. Blackstone's efforts.

Early in 1890 a few gentlemen of Branford formed themselves into a committee or association to solicit contributions for a free public library. In their endeavor to



ROTUNDA OF THE TIMOTHY B. BLACKSTONE LIBRARY

raise the necessary means they wrote to a number of non-resident natives of Branford, among whom was Mr. Timothy B. Blackstone, inviting them to contribute to their laudable undertaking. Mr. Blackstone welcomed this opportunity to render a great public service for his birth-place and replied suggesting that if it would be agreeable to the committee he would be glad to erect a building, supply it with books and present it to the citizens of Branford, a free public library, as a memorial to his father, the late Captain James Blackstone.

The library committee and citizens of Branford gladly accepted this munificent offer, and Mr. Blackstone built and endowed a magnificent library that is a crown of honor and distinction to the place of his nativity, which had already been crowned by the noble lives and achievements of his fore-fathers for so many generations.

The ample library grounds occupy a commanding and central site on the main street. The building is of the purest Grecian Ionic design, the architectural detail being taken from the Erechtheum on the Acropolis of Athens, the most perfect example of Ionic architecture of the golden age of Greek art which has been described as a temple of marvelous beauty—the wonder of the age and the delight of succeeding generations. The exterior of the James Blackstone Library is entirely of fine marble.

The structure from base to encircling dome is a beautiful and imposing study.

The base and ground plan of the edifice is in the semblance of a Latin cross, upon which is laid a Greek cross, the cross always symbolizing the utmost labor and sacrifice possible to man, for the sake of others or for great ends; the Latin cross symbolical of effort by power, order, and authority, men ruling themselves and thus conquering and ruling the world; the Greek cross standing for light, intelligence, the illumination of truth; while surmounting the Latin cross of power and the Greek cross of illumination is the dome of aspiration and achievement. So there is wrought into this structure and crystallized here that which is emblematic of the great civilizations of the world, a silent teacher for all who come and go as the years roll on.

In accordance with Mr. Blackstone's wishes the control of the library was vested in a self-perpetuating board of

trustees of six residents of Branford and the librarian of Yale University.

The completed library building was dedicated June 17, 1896, with appropriate public exercises. Rev. Timothy Dwight, D.D., LL.D., President of Yale University, made the opening prayer. Hon. Lynde Harrison and Professor Arthur T. Hadley of Yale delivered addresses.

The act of incorporation of the James Blackstone Memorial Library Association was approved March 23, 1893. It states the purposes for which said corporation is created are to establish and maintain a public library and reading room and in its discretion a lecture hall, gymnasium and rooms for purposes of science and art in the town of Branford. Its provision that the librarian of Yale University shall ex-officio be a member of said corporation was eminently fitting, for Branford was the first home of the few books that were given by ten or eleven Connecticut ministers for the founding of a college in the colony of Connecticut about the year 1700, and thus it was that the great university of Yale was founded.

This library, with additions, was kept at Branford in a room set apart for this purpose for nearly three years.

There could be no greater contrast in external appearance than that between the library of 1700 and that dedicated in 1896. That was the founding of a college that has since grown to be the great Yale University; this is for the daily use of an active, progressive community. That was given out of poverty, this out of abundance. That had few books and appliances and only a precarious home. This is admirably equipped in all that goes to make a library a place of education and culture, and has a building of which not only the town and state but the nation may well be proud. Yet these two gifts, these two libraries, were animated by a similar lofty motive and noble purpose.

As Mr. J. H. Woods stated in his tribute to the memory of Mr. Blackstone there was not a mark on this magnificent gift to indicate that T. B. Blackstone had anything to do with it, but after his death prominent people of Connecticut desired that a tablet proclaiming the name of the giver should be placed in this library and the Board of Trustees of the Library had placed in the portico of the main entrance of the building a bronze tablet bearing this description:

The James Blackstone Library

"This Building, Which Was Completed and Dedicated in 1896, is the Gift of Timothy B. Blackstone of Chicago, Illinois, Who Died in That City May 26, 1900.

"Mr. Blackstone was Born in Branford in 1829, and He Gave the Building to the People of His Native Town As a Memorial to His Father, the Honorable James Blackstone, Who Died in Branford in 1886.

"This Tablet is Placed Upon the Building by the Trustees of the Library Association, October, 1900."

The tablet is plain and finished with the artistic "egg and dart" moulding that predominates all over the building.

This tablet was only a rightful tribute to the man whose affection for his native town and filial devotion to his father's memory, led him to place here this enduring monument of architectural beauty, this ever-flowing fountain of education, culture and refinement.

The original incorporators were Thorvald F. Hammer, Edward F. Jones, Dr. Charles W. Gaylord, Edmund Zacher, William Regan and Henry W. Hubbard. The librarian of Yale University at that time was Addison Van Name. The present trustees are Dr. Gaylord, President; Edwin R. Kelsey, Secretary; Alfred E. Hammer, Treasurer; Mr. Zacher, and Andrew Keogh, librarian at Yale.

The first librarian was Arthur M. Tyler, who resigned in 1898. The second was Henry A. Whitney, who was appointed in 1899 and served until his death in 1912. He was succeeded by Charles N. Baxter, the present able librarian.

The Timothy B. Blackstone Memorial Branch Library Chicago

Mrs. Blackstone in 1904 presented to the city of Chicago in memory of her husband, the T. B. Blackstone Memorial Branch Library. It is a most notable addition to the architecture of Chicago and the West, being one of the finest and costliest library buildings of its size in the world, and marks the beginning of the branch library system in this city. This magnificent structure is of fine Ionic Grecian type of architecture, being modeled after the Erechthéum at Athens, like that of the James Blackstone Memorial Library in Branford, Connecticut, and was designed by the same architect, Mr. S. S. Beman of Chicago. Its location, at the intersections of Blackstone and Lake Park Avenues and Forty-ninth Street, is ideal for architectural effect and is in a thickly settled section near a public school. It fills a long-felt need in this district. It is operated as a branch library having some 1,500 or 2,000 books on its shelves which are circulated for home service or may be read in the reading room in the building. Direct connection with the central city library is secured by means of a telephone and a delivery station so that books for a special service may be quickly transferred.

The children's room, with its walls lined with books suitable to the young; its low tables and small chairs for the little ones, attract the school children like a magnet, who here spend many happy and profitable hours.

The exterior of the edifice is entirely of light gray Concord granite, monumental in design, complete in execution and with its columned portico, low dome and classic lines, is most impressive.

In presenting the library to the city Mrs. Blackstone sought to avoid ostentation. After making a brief but appropriate and impressive address, she simply handed

over the deed and keys to Mr. John W. Eckhart, president of the board of directors of the new institution, on January 8, 1904. Frederick H. Hild, public librarian, was present and the following members of the board of directors: President, John W. Eckhart; Vice-President, James F. Bowers; Librarian, Frederick H. Hild; C. P. Brosseau, John W. Lowe, Samuel Despres, F. A. Lindstrand, Dennis J. Egan, Bernard Cigrand, Colin C. H. Fyffe, Directors.

The library is greatly appreciated and largely used by residents of Chicago and visitors.

As an expression of appreciation a beautiful book was prepared containing the following tribute:

"To Mrs. T. B. Blackstone:

"Who gives a library, places within reach of the smallest child the best thought of all the ages.

"We, the undersigned, wish to express to you our appreciation of the T. B. Blackstone memorial. It will afford rest and refreshment to wayfarers journeying through this world to the house not made with hands eternal in the heavens, and coming generations will arise and call you blessed. In its architectural beauty this memorial is a gem of purest ray serene. May we wear it worthily. May we use it as not abusing it, and may we ever be grateful to the generous giver."

This was signed by a large number of adult residents of Chicago and many children residing in the neighborhood and together with pictures of exterior and interior views of the library was bound in an exquisite bronze leather cover, which had a picture of the library embossed upon the front. This book in a satin-covered and satin-lined box was presented to Mrs. Blackstone soon after she had given the library to the city.

It is in munificent gifts, like these two magnificent libraries of Mr. and Mrs. Blackstone, in foundations like these, that will contribute to the making of the best citizenship, for it places old and young in touch with large men and large things, and such touch can only be had by those who have access to the information books and libraries place within their reach.

Mr. Blackstone accumulated wealth not for its own sake or for display, but for the good he could do with it and he ever held the public interests of the community

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at heart more than his own personal power and aggrandizement.

The same high principle which led him to earn his wealth honestly led him to give it with far-sighted purpose. He made the hours allotted to him in life's pilgrimage gleam with the pure gold of improved opportunity in the service of his fellow man, and from a well-rounded life rich in honors and years, Mr. Blackstone passed to the reward of the strong faith of his fathers.

It is in such life-service as his, and such men as he that we can see the best fruits of our American institutions.

It is in what Mr. Blackstone did and was in himself that makes his life so important a study for the young. The footprints he has left in the sands of time will give encouragement to many another of earth's toiling aspirants.



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